

Is It Time for a Resume Refresh?

Robert Half's Resumania™ Shows the Dangers of Leaving Resume Readers Guessing

TORONTO, May 3, 2017 /CNW/ - As the saying goes, you never get a second chance to make a first impression – and the expression especially applies during the job hunt. But for those who may be new to the working world or haven't pursued a job in a while, a primer on what employers are looking for in application materials may be needed to stand out for the right reasons.

"Your resume is the first opportunity to grab the hiring manager's attention, so it must clearly demonstrate why you should be considered for the role," said Greg Scileppi, president of Robert Half, International Staffing Operations. "Take the time to customize the application to the job description, highlighting your relevant skills and experience; this can help you stand out, and increase your chances of getting called back for an interview."

Following is a section-by-section breakdown of resume best practices, along with some [Resumania™](#) examples — flubs by real job seekers Robert Half has run across that should not be emulated.

THE HEADING

Do: Include basic information: name, phone number, email address and a link to your LinkedIn profile.

Don't: Add protected or sensitive details, such as age, race, date of birth, social insurance number, marital status or religion, and attempts at humour. Trying to be funny usually induces more eye-rolls than laughs. Here are job seekers who missed the memo:

- *"Marital status: None that I know of."*
- *"Important note: The fastest way to get in touch with me is through email because my laptop is attached to my hip."*

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Do: Lead with a concise overview of your most impressive qualifications, emphasizing skills and achievements most pertinent to the position.

Don't: Offer empty statements that add little insight into your top selling points. While short and sweet is great, these applicants left out all the details:

- *"Summary: I need a job."*
- *"Summary: I qualify for this position."*
- *"Summary: Ability to think inside the box."*

EDUCATION

Do: Cite the institution you attended, the degree earned, and (optionally) the month and year you graduated. Mention if you graduated with honours. If you were a member of several organizations, include that information in a separate section.

Don't: Include your grade average, unless it's truly impressive and you're a recent graduate. Listing "relevant courses" is also unnecessary unless you lack work experience. The following job candidates' education sections certainly didn't make the grade:

- *"Education: I didn't achieve much. Schools did little to challenge me, so I didn't put much effort in."*
- *"Education: Attended a useless diploma mill."*
- *"Education: I'll be honest, I learn from experience, not the classroom."*

EXPERIENCE

Do: Focus less on your responsibilities and more on the positive impact you made. Convert statements that merely describe your job duties into ones that spotlight specific accomplishments.

Don't: Include a laundry list of every duty you've ever performed. Also, avoid vague [wording](#) such as *participated in* or *was responsible for* and instead use more powerful verbs such as *created*, *led*, *initiated* or *increased*. These candidates certainly didn't win over prospective employers:

- *"Experience: Too much to list. Ask me about it in person at my [interview](#)."*
- *"Experience: Recently escaped from a bad boss situation after two years. It feels odd but amazing to finally be free of that jerk and his negative energy."*

- *"Experience: Technical support. I was terminated after arriving to training late four times."*

SKILLS

Do: Highlight specific skills that dovetail with the job you're seeking, paying special attention to soft skills. Employers know there's a good chance candidates with strong communication, leadership and interpersonal abilities, for example, will mesh well with colleagues and the company culture.

Don't: Waste precious space being vague — or pretentious — about your abilities. These applicants violated another mortal resume sin: not proofreading:

- *"Skills: Writing, listening and public eaking. Yes, I can engage in intellectual conversations with a myriad of professionals!"*
- *"Skills: I always try to be goo at what I am doing."*
- *"Skills: Efficient and efficient."*

ACHIEVEMENTS AND HONOURS

Do: Understand that all accomplishments are not created equal. Focus on achievements that connect to your career.

Don't: List so-called "accomplishments" that are dated or unrelated to your profession. This mid-career professional should have kept this personal point of pride to himself:

- *"Achievements: When I was nine years old, I started a neighbourhood newspaper staffed entirely by the grade school kids I played with every day. They went on strike after a few weeks, and I edited the paper myself until it folded."*

About Robert Half

Founded in 1948, Robert Half is the world's first and largest specialized staffing firm. The Menlo Park, Calif.-based company has more than 325 staffing locations worldwide and offers online job search and management tools at roberthalf.ca. For career and management advice, follow our blog at roberthalf.ca/blog. Follow Robert Half Canada on Twitter at [@RobertHalf_CAN](https://twitter.com/RobertHalf_CAN) for additional workplace advice and hiring trends.

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